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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ANKARA 005393

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SUBJECT: CONTACTS FORESEE CONTINUED CONFLICT IN SOUTHEAST
DIYARBAKIR

REF: A. ANKARA 5109

[1](#)B. ANKARA 5115

Classified By: (U) A/DCM Tim Betts; reasons: E.O.12958 1.4 (b,d).

1.(U) This is a Consulate Adana Cable.

[1](#)2. (C) Summary: Longtime contacts expressed deep concerns about the ongoing ethnic violence and protests in southeast Turkey and generally foresee little likelihood of a near-term change in the regional dynamic of continuing clashes between the new, pro-PKK Democratic Society Movement (DSM) and GOT security forces. Human rights contacts welcome PM Erdogan's August "Kurdish Question" comments but saw little prospect of any follow-up implementation. No one in the region, including Diyarbakir's governor has any information about how the Prime Minister intends to follow through on his speech, although many have ideas on what they would like to see from the government. For their part, AK party officials in Diyarbakir said they had formed a working group with small local NGOs to make suggestions to the Prime Minister's office. DSM officials in Batman and Diyarbakir emphasized that any democratization which did not encompass the release of PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan and an amnesty for the PKK would not satisfy their new party's membership. End Summary.

REGIONAL CONTACTS DOWNBEAT

[1](#)3. (C) AMCONSUL Adana officers traveled to Diyarbakir and Batman September 6-9 to discuss regional developments with GoT, municipal and NGO contacts, and recently-selected DSM members. The mood of all but the DSM members was downbeat. Longtime consulate contact and prominent veteran human right activist Sezgin Tanrikulu, president of the Diyarbakir Bar Association and its Human Rights Foundation chapter, said that the security situation "scared" him for the "first time in fifteen years of living in southeastern Turkey." Bar Association colleagues concurred, adding that they saw the DSM, which has announced that it would seek formal party status in the next week, as even more radical and pro-PKK than the previous Kurdish DEHAP, HADEP and DEP parties. They also warned that, should the GOT not crack down on illegal DSM rallies and marches, a lynch mob mood could overtake the country, much like it had during the Mersin flag-burning frenzy. They also mentioned that many moderate Kurds had concluded that the execution-style killing in July of Hikmet Fidan, a relatively moderate Kurdish rights activist widely believed to have been slain by the PKK, had been a warning to them not to pursue democratization at the expense of the PKK's primacy in the southeast Kurdish political scene. This view was supported by other contacts, including Sahismail Bedirhanoglu, leader of the influential Southeast Businessmen's Association, and Diyarbakir municipal official Seyhmus Diken. Tanrikulu said that this trend was compounded by fragmentation of the PKK and the loss of what he claimed was DEHAP's moderating influence on the region's rural populace, which he described as customarily more pro-PKK than urban dwellers. He said that Diyarbakir's police chief had observed to him recently that, since the PKK had fragmented into smaller factions, the TNP has no one to which to reach out through quiet back channels to defuse crisis situations.

EXPECTING MORE DEMOCRATIC STEPS FROM PM ERDOGAN ?

[1](#)4. (C) Asked what democratization steps they expected after PM Erdogan's speech, Tanrikulu and his colleagues said that they expected little, but gave the PM credit for "putting the Kurdish question in the public vocabulary." They said that the PM was so vague in its speech that they did not think that Erdogan had any follow-up implementation in mind.

5.(C) On democratization, the Bar Association suggested a six-step plan: 1) The removal of all Kurdish language obstacles, both in broadcast and in political speech in public (asked whether this would extend to all mother tongues in Anatolia, they agreed it would); 2) the ability of all Turkish citizens to be able to see their children educated in their mother tongues; 3) university-level linguistic research for non-Turkish languages spoken in Anatolia (mentioning Laz and Arabic as examples); 4) revision of the Political Parties Act to lower the election threshold below its current 10

percent mark; 5) a billion dollar or more endowed southeast Turkey development fund for village reconstruction, rural infrastructure and re-stocking livestock; and 6) an economic incentive program to attract capital investment to southeast Turkey. The group emphasized that this democratization should be started immediately and unconditionally. They saw dealing with regional security issues as a separate question which should not have a bearing on further democratization steps.

16. (C) Asked what the GoT's next steps would be, Diyarbakir governor Ekan Ala said that he had no information on the subject and was interested in learning himself. He stated that he was open to hearing U.S. suggestions and added that the "EU has not been shy about offering suggestions." He said that he had heard positive local reactions to PM Erdogan's speech, but that he sensed more was needed to convince the region that "change is coming." Asked about recent clashes between security forces and protestors, he said that police, answerable to the interior ministry through regional governors, such as himself, were "taking one line while the Army sees things a different way and is harder on these things." (Comment: While human rights contacts agree that police in several SE provinces such as Diyarbakir, are being relatively restrained, most regional police are still almost as hard line as their Jandarma and Army counterparts. End Comment.)

7.(C) Diyarbakir AK Party officials told AMCONSUL Adana officers that they did not have any details on PM Erdogan's next steps, but had formed, along with many other Diyarbakir NGOs, a working group to develop a plan which would embrace "mother tongue freedoms, assembly, religious freedom, infrastructure and human development as next steps" in the region's democratic development. They emphasized the need for the details of the plan to be developed as widely as possible and not be seen as a top-down AK Party-driven exercise lacking broader legitimacy. Diyarbakir NGOs reflected cautious enthusiasm about the initiative to us and said that it could be both a "way to develop a plan to take eventually to Prime Minister Erdogan" and a bulwark to rally around as a moderate platform alternative to the "one-sided, hard line views of those sympathizing with Imrali and the forces in the mountains who are opposing peace." They noted, however, that AK cooperation with broader elements in Kurdish society in Diyarbakir is untested and the AK party's staying power on the democratization agenda is undemonstrated. (Comment: We concur. End Comment.)

WHY THE CLASHES NOW ?

18. (C) Asked why the clashes had increased in the wake of PM Erdogan's much-heralded speech on the "Kurdish Question," many human rights contacts commented that neither the PKK nor many Turkish government and military figures favored Turkey's start of the EU accession process because it would "leave them outside the process, on the margins where they do not want to be." These groups therefore saw the period between now and October 3 as the moment to try to derail the Turkey's EU accession process. While most contacts did not see an end to clashes should the Oct. 3 accession process begin as scheduled, one contact postulated the clashes' frequency and intensity could abate after October 3. None of the contacts alleged a conspiracy between the government and PKK elements, but most said that the different groups opposed to Turkey's progress on the path toward the EU were driven to complementary steps, as well as a cycle of action and reaction, by the converging timeline.

WHAT DOES DSM WANT ?

19. (C) New DSM members in Diyarbakir and Batman told AMCONSUL Adana PO that, even with the fullest imaginable implementation of a southeast democratization program, like the six-step plan outlined above in para.4, "that would only meet half of our demands." Asked what would comprise the other half, several DSM members called for Abdullah Ocalan's release, a general amnesty for PKK members and the immediate return of former PKK members to political life in Turkey. Some mused about bringing Turkish Army members to justice as well. Another DSM member said, "it is unthinkable to imagine the problems of the Southeast solved without Ocalan's release." Several DSM interlocutors insisted that the PKK was the only "interlocutor who could resolve the problems of the southeast."

WILL DSM'S EMERGENCE HELP OR HINDER PROGRESS ?

10. (C) Diyarbakir human rights contacts told us that they saw DSM as "radical" and "unlikely to bring anything constructive to the discussion about reform in the region." Bedirhanoglu said that he could not trust any group which could not spell out its end goal. He claimed DSM's end goal is "confederacy, independence, constitutional change in the context of the existing republic." (Note: AMCONSUL Adana found this a fuzzy topic with DSM members in recent meetings

as well, with one member encouraging us to read Ocalan's books on the matter. End Note.) Diken said that DSM was an umbrella group of more radical former DEHAP/HADEP/DEP members, former PKK, recently-released PKK or rural political novices. He said that, in the short run, DSM was too immature, ill-focused ("they only think of what Imrali says," he said - a reference to Ocalan's place of incarceration), and ill-led to contribute much constructive to the regional political directive. He mused that, in the long run, at least their existence might convince "those in the mountains that there is some place for them in the Turkish political world to some day return."

11.(C) Comment: We share contacts' concern about the direction in which Turkey's southeast region seems headed. (Note: People in the southeast have been saying this for years. End Note.) It is, at best, unclear as to whether the fits and starts of the GOT's EU-linked democratization process can produce a dynamic that will fulfill the demands in the region. End Comment.

12. (C) Comment (cont.): Meetings with new DSM players revealed a novice grass roots group resolute on pressing the pro-PKK agenda seemingly regardless of the clashes and violence such a tack would likely bring. This appears to be upping the ante from DEHAP, whose members may have harbored some of the same sentiments but did not openly tout them. DSM now does not seem focused on electoral outcomes and formal politicking. It is unlikely to attract even as many votes as DEHAP in 2006-7 polling absent a surge in first-time rural voters. Moderate Kurdish voters, especially some urban groups, are likely to look elsewhere, such as AK, ANAP and CHP (as in Tunceli), or a new party. However, their presence on the electoral scene could well fragment the Kurdish vote and may increase the alienation from the Turkish mainstream of the rural Kurdish vote and urban PKK loyalists beyond the reach of hoped-for democratization progress. End Comment.

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